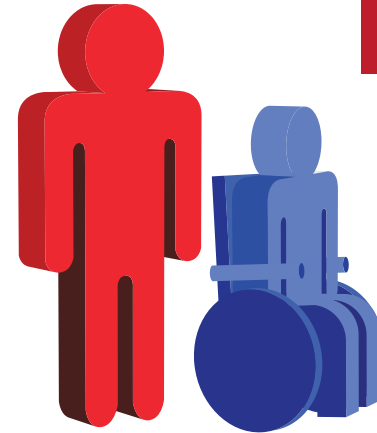


Dialogue



The newsletter of the Human Resources Division, January 2012

Assistive Technology: Changing People's Lives

Throughout the day on September 23, consumers, providers, agency staff, and curious technology enthusiasts streamed through the Hynes Convention Center in downtown Boston to attend “Products and Technologies that Change People’s Lives: Universal Design & Assistive Technology in Massachusetts,” a summit and exposition event showcasing Massachusetts’ wealth of resources in assistive technology and accommodations for people with disabilities.

As part of the Commonwealth’s continued commitment to being a model employer of people with disabilities, this summit helped to further integrate assistive technology into mainstream thought around the design of home, work, learning and recreational environments. The day featured a series of sessions on assistive technology in each of these life environments, and a design competition challenged local engineering students – the future designers of our world – to think creatively about building seamless, universal access for all.

Everyone has a role to play in universal access. Experts from numerous fields weighed in on the discussion of assistive technology. Throughout the day, conference sessions featured architectural,

engineering and design professionals familiar with creating and applying assistive technology, business professionals familiar with financing accommodations, and successful individuals whose lives have been transformed by having access to appropriate assistive technology. In a special plenary session, Governor Deval Patrick, Lieutenant Governor Tim Murray, Secretary of Health and Human Services JudyAnn Bigby, Secretary of Administration and Finance, Jay Gonzalez and Secretary of Education, Paul Reville and several other Massachusetts policymakers addressed the Commonwealth’s commitment to ongoing assistive technology innovation.

A quick glance around the main exhibit hall that afternoon made it clear that universal design and assistive technology is very much already on the mind of Massachusetts. Visitors milled through the aisles of approximately 90 exhibitors, including displays of adaptive motor vehicles and a hands-on demo area where a noontime game of wheelchair tennis was open to non-regular wheelchair users. This day was all part of the effort to make living, working, learning, and having fun more universally accessible, in the Commonwealth and beyond. ■



**The Commonwealth:
Working to be a Model Employer**

Model Employer Trainings

Over the past several months, the Commonwealth has rolled out a series of trainings for various segments of the Massachusetts workforce. Through these trainings, state government in Massachusetts will continue to become an even more comfortable work environment for people with disabilities and their colleagues.

Manager Trainings:

In their role as supervisors of the Massachusetts workforce, managers need to understand the complexities of disabilities. They are expected to identify the essential functions of a job to be able to manage workers with modified job duties. In addition to addressing these issues, the manager training explained the evolution of the concept of a “qualified person with a disability,” reasonable accommodations and the process of acquiring and providing them, and the importance of the interactive process. The Commonwealth set a very aggressive goal to train 500 managers in a two month time frame; we achieved more than 80 percent of the goal with more than 400 managers having received this training. Additionally, special training sessions were conducted for 75 senior managers to ensure that all of our seniors leaders were informed around this important training initiative.

Trainings for ADA Coordinators:

ADA Coordinators are the resident agency experts in workplace accommodations and disability sensitivity. They are sought out as coach for employees, consultant for managers, advisor for heads of agencies, and community liaison for the public. This training, taken by more than 70 Massachusetts ADA Coordinators, ensures that they understand their major roles and responsibilities, as well as disability content and pertinent laws.

Online Employee Trainings:

This e-Learning training opportunity, entitled “Diversity Part II – Disability Awareness” was launched in mid-September. It presents disability among colleagues as part of healthy workforce diversity. It cites the basis in law for workplace

accommodations, offers a lesson in disability etiquette, and explains the important distinction between disclosure and self-identification. To date, more than 7,300 executive branch employees have taken the mandatory course. The course is still open and available to all employees of the Commonwealth through PACE, with a target date of June 30, 2012 for completion.

Train the Trainers:

Massachusetts is well equipped to continue the effort of education and training around disability issues for all levels of employment. A group of 78 individuals were trained to deliver the half-day, manager classroom training and further the work of the State as a Model Employer in the coming year.

These trainings will be important tools for continuing to build a better work environment for people with disabilities in Massachusetts. ■

Managing Mental Health Module

In the discussion of disability awareness and accommodations, especially in the workplace, mental health issues have needed particular, careful attention to minimize stigma. Massachusetts is developing a specific mental health training module, called “Managing Mental Health @ Work.” This two-hour training for managers will help to define mental health and differentiate between different types of mental illness. It will teach managers to recognize observable behaviors in employees that could indicate a mental health condition, and to apply the interactive process to effectively implement appropriate accommodations for employees with mental health disabilities, as well as provide information and access to resources for managers and employees alike. ■



The Commonwealth:
Working to be a Model Employer

Are we making progress?

Figure 1. The Percentage of Self-Identified **Executive Branch Employees**, March 2007 to September 2011

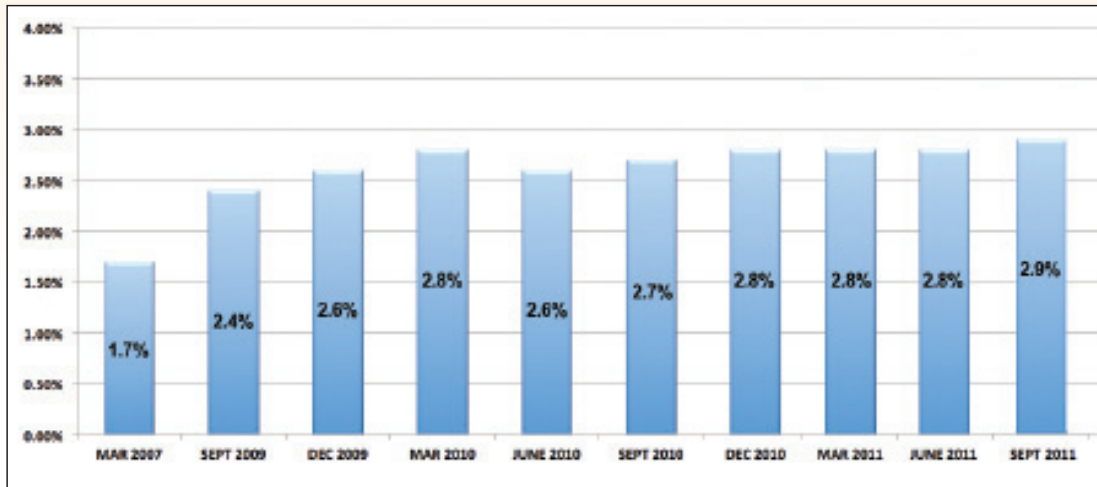


Figure 2. The Percentage of Self-Identified **Executive Branch Managers**, March 2007 to September 2011

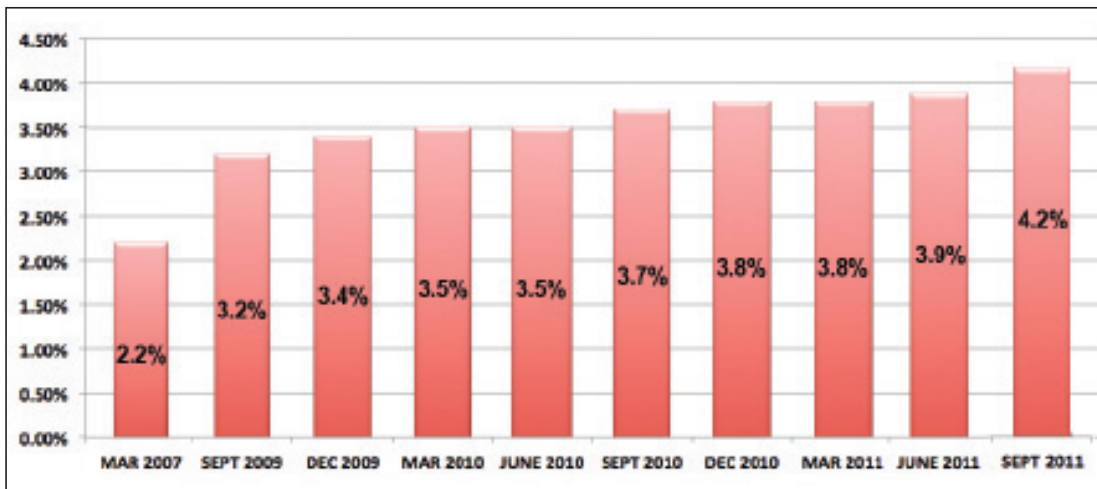
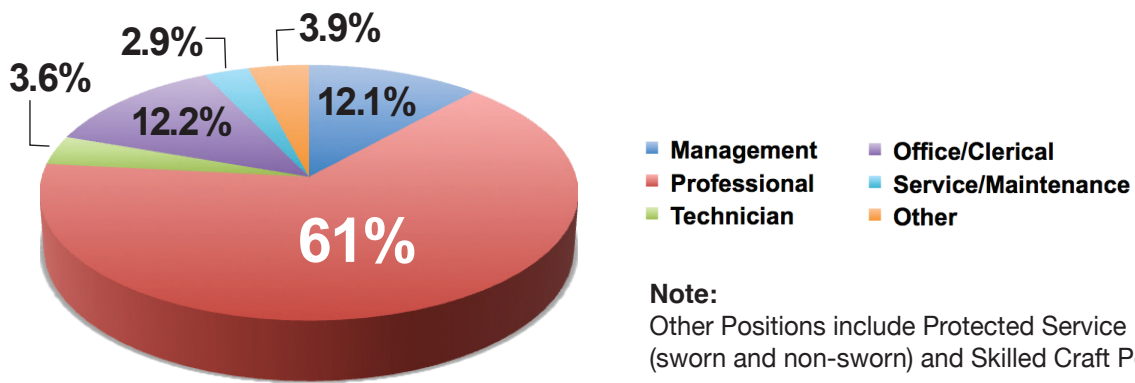


Figure 3. The Percentage of Self-identified Executive Branch Managers and Employees by EEO-4 Job Category as of close of Quarter 1, FY12



The Commonwealth:
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